

- Sermon: Micah 2. “The Father who cares”

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Sermon text and audio available for download at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

Happy Father’s Day!...

- The flat tyre...

III – I remember once Heather and I were on the highway. Heather was driving. And we got a flat tyre travelling at 110kms/hr. That was a bit frightening. The whole tyre came off the wheel and wrapped around the axle of the car. We stopped. We changed it. And we kept going. You don’t really have a choice with something like that. You can’t really ignore it. If you keep driving on a flat tyre, you’ll end up doing a lot of damage to yourself and possibly other people, and you won’t get very far.

- 1. The sin of the child

God’s people, Israel, had a problem with sin. They had been doing the wrong thing for a long time, and just kept ignoring God. It’s like they had a flat tyre and just kept driving. They thought they could get away with it. And they stopped listening to God. And Micah’s message to them in chapter 2 is: “You’re doing the wrong thing, and you’re not going to get away with it. There are going to be consequences.”

So first of all, what was Israel doing? Verse 1

- *“Woe to those who plan iniquity...”*

This is what God says to Israel: “You’ve been **planning** evil.” The rich people were going to bed at night and planning evil ways to defraud and rip off the poor. Verse 2:

- *“They covet fields and seize them, and houses and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.”*

The rich were taking people’s houses and land. And that’s a big thing in Israel, because your property was your livelihood. If you didn’t have land, you might as well be a slave. So God had made these laws, that you could sell your land to pay your debts, but every 50 years, there was to be a **Jubilee** year. In that 50th year, **all** debts were cancelled and **all** land was to be returned to the original owners. So your debt was completely cleared every 50 years. (That would be nice, wouldn’t it!)

But this wasn’t happening. The Jubilee year wasn’t happening. Debts weren’t being cancelled. The rich were finding dishonest ways to take land and houses off people and keep them for good. They were defrauding their own people. And what does God say?

- Verse 3: *“I am planning disaster against this people.”*

God is their Father. And Israel is his child. And God is saying that he will punish them for their sin. God is watching his children disobey him and ignore him and he says to them, through the prophet Micah: “You’re not going to get away with this! There are consequences for your actions.”

Now listen to what Israel says to Micah in response. From verse 6:

- ⁶ *“Do not prophesy,” their prophets say. “Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us.”*
⁷ *Should it be said, O house of Jacob: “Is the Spirit of the LORD angry? Does he do such things?”*

What are Israel saying to Micah? “Stop talking!” “No!” They say. “Our Father doesn’t get angry! We won’t be disgraced! He doesn’t punish!”

Israel doesn’t want to hear from Micah. They’ve stopped listening to God. They’ve stopped reading his Word. They’ve stopped listening to his prophets. They refuse to believe that their heavenly Father would be angry with them because of their sin. AND, they actually think they’re good people. They think they’re upright.

And God says: You’ve got to be kidding! You think you’re upright? From verse 9:

- ⁹ *You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children forever.* ¹⁰ *Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy.*

God says: You’ve ruined everything I’ve given you! Your sin has ruined life in the Promised Land. You’ve taken away my blessing and defiled the land I gave you.

God is the Father who has given his children everything, but they’ve ignored him and they’re pretending there’s nothing wrong.

• The love of the Father

So what does this mean for us today? It tells us three things – about sin, about God and about us:

1. Sin.

What this tells us about sin is that **no-one gets away with sin**. Sometimes we can be deceived into thinking that we can get away with sinful behaviour. And we’re not talking about **accidental** sin here. We’re talking about deliberate, calculated, premeditated sin. We’re talking about **planning sinful behaviour**. Planning an adulterous affair, cheating on your tax return, gossiping about someone, planning to rip someone off – deliberate sinful behaviour. We will not get away with it.

Because... sin destroys relationships. When we sin, there is an immediate consequence. You’ve damaged your relationship with another person, and you’ve damaged your relationship with your heavenly Father. And the longer we ignore that sin in our life, the longer we refuse to repent, the more damage is done. It’s like driving on a flat tyre. You **can** ignore it, but it will just do more damage.

If we don’t make **changes** in our life, and repent of our sinfulness, the damage continues and things just get worse.

2. God

What this tells us about God is that **he is the Father who loves us**. Like any loving Father, he can’t stand by and watch us hurt ourselves and destroy our relationship with him. For example, in Psalm 118:18, the Psalmist writes:

- *“The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.”*

God is a loving Father who will chasten us – he will discipline us, and correct us – he will do all a loving Father can to lead us back to him. God will not give up on us, even when we ignore him and keep sinning against him. Even if it’s difficult, God is our Father, and he never gives up on his children, because he loves us.

3. Us

And what this tells us about ourselves is that if we want to have a real and honest relationship with God, **we need to listen to him so we can KNOW him and know how to respond to him**. When we stop listening to God's word, what we do is build our **own** image of God. That's what Israel did – they built an image of a God as a Father who never disciplines, a Father who never punishes, a Father who doesn't judge, a Father who's nice and happy all the time and doesn't care when we sin and do the wrong thing. A Father who never gets angry. And Micah says to Israel: "I know what you want!" – verse 11 –

- "You want a prophet that prophesies beer and wine!"

You want a prophet who says: "Your future is full of beer and wine!" That's the sort of prophet you want! And that's the danger for us – when we stop listening to God's word, it's very easy to build our own distorted image of God.

So let's go to the end of chapter 2 now. There's one more **very important** thing Micah tells us about the future.

The Shepherd Father ...

Have a look at verse 12. God says:

- ¹² *"I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people.*
¹³ *One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them, the LORD at their head."*

This is God's promise for our future. Here is a glimpse of heaven. God WILL save his people. God WILL send a king to lead them. God WILL look after his sheep, and shepherd them to safety, even though they have sinned against him. How will he do that? In 700 years, he will send... Jesus! Listen to what Jesus says about himself in John 10:14-15:

- ¹⁴ *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep."*

Jesus is God's King, God's shepherd, on earth. The Father sends his Son to shepherd his people together and bring them home safely. How? By laying down his life for us on the cross. (But more on that in 3 weeks when we get to chapter 5!)

4 things to take away today:

- **1. Repent** Turn away from our sin and make the necessary changes in our life. Change the flat tyre.
- **2. Love** God is the Father who loves us. He disciplines us to help us stay close to him.
- **3. Listen** to God. When he tells you the tyre is flat, listen! And let him help you. Don't do it on your own.
- **4. Shepherd** God is sending Jesus to be the Shepherd to lead us to eternal safety.

Let's pray.